Earnings guide

Guide to labour statistics

Learn about our different earnings measures and how to use them

Released 7/11/2022

Sections

- Guide to labour statistics
  - Labour statistics recent and upcoming developments
  - About labour statistics
  - Earnings guide
    - **On this page**
      - Overview
      - Earnings measures and uses
      - I'm looking for earnings by...
      - Data and resources available
    - Earnings levels guide
    - Average earnings guide
    - Wages change and growth guide
    - Weekly and hourly earnings guide
    - Aggregate earnings guide
  - Gender pay gap guide
  - Industry employment guide
  - Regional labour market data guide
  - Hours worked guide
  - Labour Force Survey products guide

Close

Overview

We produce a wide range of earnings statistics from a mix of data sources, for many different purposes. It can be challenging to choose the right earnings data to use. This guide will help you to understand the different features of our various earnings measures and sources and choose the correct measure to suit your needs.

Our definition of earnings

Earnings statistics generally refer to gross (pre-tax) cash wages and salaries paid to employees at regular intervals for work done as well as paid leave. They exclude irregular payments, employers' social contributions and severance and termination pay, as well as the value of 'non-cash' benefits provided to employees as part of a salary package.

Earnings statistics are one of four main areas of interest in measuring employee remuneration. The Earnings chapter (/statistics/detailed-methodology-information/concepts-sources-methods/labour-statistics-concepts-sources-and-methods/2021/concepts-and-sources/earnings) of Labour Statistics: Concepts, Sources and Methods has more information on earnings and employee remuneration related concepts and how we produce the data.

Earnings measures and uses

Each measure is designed for different purposes and has its own strengths and weaknesses - they are not simply different ways of measuring the same thing.

Use the guides linked below to learn more about the ways we measure earnings and when to use each measure.

- Earnings levels guide (/statistics/understanding-statistics/guide-labour-statistics/earnings-guide/earnings-levels-guide)
- Average earnings guide (/statistics/understanding-statistics/guide-labour-statistics/earnings-guide/average-earnings-guide)
- Wages change and growth guide (/statistics/understanding-statistics/guide-labour-statistics/earnings-guide/wages-change-and-growth-guide)
- Weekly and hourly earnings guide (/statistics/understanding-statistics/guide-labour-statistics/earnings-guide/weekly-and-hourly-earnings-guide)
- Aggregate earnings guide (/statistics/understanding-statistics/guide-labour-statistics/earnings-guide/aggregate-earnings-guide)

Measures available by data source

This table summarises the most relevant data sources for each earnings measure. We produce additional data sources which also include earnings statistics.

Measures available by data source (a)

	Earnings levels / average earnings	Wage growth / change	Weekly earnings	Hourly earnings	Aggregate earnings
Average Weekly Earnings	✔	■	✔		
Employee Earnings and Hours	✔		✔	✔	
Employee earnings (b)	■	■	■	■	
Public Sector Employment and Earnings					✔(c)
Jobs in Australia	■				■
Labour Account	■	■			✔
Monthly Employee Earnings Indicator		■			■
National Accounts	■				✔
Personal Income in Australia	✔				■
Wage Price Index		✔			

✔ Recommended for this topic in relation to earnings data.

■ Published for this topic in relation to earnings data however some limitations (/statistics/detailed-methodology-information/concepts-sources-methods/labour-statistics-concepts-sources-and-methods/2023/concepts-and-sources/earnings#abs-data-sources) should be noted.

a. Ratings provide guidance on the relative quality of the different sources. Business sources generally provide more accurately reported earnings than household sources as data are obtained from employers' payrolls. Business sources are recommended for each topic where available. For more information, please see the Earnings chapter (/statistics/detailed-methodology-information/concepts-sources-methods/labour-statistics-concepts-sources-and-methods/2023/concepts-and-sources/earnings#abs-data-sources) of Labour Statistics: Concepts, Sources and Methods.

b. Based on data from the annual Characteristics of Employment Labour Force supplementary survey.

c. Public sector only.

I'm looking for earnings by...

Use this section to find earnings data you're interested in by topic. Clicking on the topic heading will provide more details.

Sex and gender pay gap

Earnings by sex

Average Weekly Earnings, Australia (/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/average-weekly-earnings-australia/latest-release) provides estimates of weekly earnings by sex for full-time adults and all employees every six months.

Detailed data

Employee earnings (/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/employee-earnings/latest-release) provides estimates of median weekly and hourly earnings, as well as distribution estimates by sex. Estimates are published annually and can be further broken down by education qualification and employment and working arrangements, including full-time and part-time status.

Employee Earnings and Hours, Australia (/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/employee-earnings-and-hours-australia/latest-release) includes the most detailed earnings data by sex and is available every two years. It provides weekly and hourly earnings estimates by sex, as well as distributional estimates and measures of hours paid for. Sex data can be broken down further by a broad range of employer and demographic characteristics, including age range, managerial and non-managerial status, method of setting pay and employer size.

Personal Income in Australia (/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/personal-income-australia/latest-release) provides annual income estimates by sex for more than 2,200 geographic areas, including local government areas and SA2s (areas of approximately 10,000 people).

Gender pay gap

The gender pay gap is the difference between male and female wages, expressed as a proportion of male wages.

Many factors influence the gender pay gap, including labour force participation over time and experience, hours worked, industry of employment, occupation, and qualifications. While a measure from Average Weekly Earnings has traditionally been the most frequently cited, no single measure provides a complete view of the gender pay gap. Instead, a range of measures should be considered together to understand what influences the gender pay gap and what this means for comparative male and female earnings.

For more detailed information on the gender pay gap, see our Gender pay gap guide (/statistics/understanding-statistics/guide-labour-statistics/gender-pay-gap-guide) .

Advice for data users

Median estimates are the most representative measure of earnings of an "average" male or female, as median estimates provide the mid-point value in a distribution - with half of people above the value and half below it. Mean (average) estimates present an arithmetic average. Earnings data has a positively skewed distribution, due to the small number of people with very high earnings. A higher proportion of males have very high earnings than females.

Earnings estimates for longer time periods (such as weekly or annual) and broad groupings (for example, all employees) are also more likely to be affected by compositional factors influencing the gender pay gap. These measures provide insight into total earnings received by males and females.

Estimates of hourly earnings and for tightly defined groups of people (for example, full-time employees by occupation) provide a more common basis for comparison, reducing the impact of compositional factors, including differences in the amount of paid work. These measures allow for a purer assessment of the difference in male and female earnings. However, these comparisons do not account for a range of other factors contributing to pay differentials such as concentration in higher or lower paying industries or occupations or reflect the overall economic position of females compared to males.

Age

Employee Earnings and Hours, Australia (/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/employee-earnings-and-hours-australia/latest-release) includes both compositional and distributional estimates of weekly and hourly earnings by age range for several employer and employee characteristics. Finer level age groupings and additional breakdowns are available from Microdata and TableBuilder: Employee Earnings and Hours (/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/available-microdata-tablebuilder/employee-earnings-and-hours-australia) or through a customised data request.

Employee earnings (/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/employee-earnings/latest-release) includes weekly earnings estimates by age group by sex and full-time/part-time status. Finer level age groupings and additional breakdowns are available from Microdata and TableBuilder: Characteristics of Employment (/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/available-microdata-tablebuilder/characteristics-employment-australia) .

Personal Income in Australia (/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/personal-income-australia/latest-release) includes earnings estimates for 10 year age groups by sex for small geographic areas. Single year age groupings are available from Microdata and TableBuilder: Jobs and income of Employed Persons (/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/available-microdata-tablebuilder/jobs-australia) .

Labour Account, Australia (/statistics/labour/labour-accounts/labour-account-australia/latest-release) includes estimates of labour income for age groups by industry division and Total All Industries.

Region and small geographic areas

Personal Income in Australia (/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/personal-income-australia/latest-release) provides annual income estimates for more than 2,200 geographic areas, including local government areas and SA2s (areas of approximately 10,000 people). More detailed data available through Microdata and TableBuilder: Jobs and Income of Employed Persons (/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/available-microdata-tablebuilder/jobs-australia) .

Census of Population and Housing (/census) data includes a 5 yearly point in time snapshot of personal, family and household income for a range of different geographic areas, down to the SA1 level (areas of between 200 and 800 people).

Employee earnings (/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/employee-earnings/latest-release) includes earnings estimates for greater capital cities (for example, Greater Melbourne) and the rest of state. SA4 level estimates (usually areas of more than 100,000 people) are available from Microdata and TableBuilder: Characteristics of Employment (/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/available-microdata-tablebuilder/characteristics-employment-australia) .

The Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) (/statistics/standards/australian-statistical-geography-standard-asgs-edition-3/latest-release) is used to classify Australia into a hierarchy of statistical areas such as SA1s and Greater Capital City Statistical Areas.

Education

Employee earnings (/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/employee-earnings/latest-release) includes mean, median earnings and distribution estimates annually by educational qualification for a wide range of employer and demographic characteristics.

Employment arrangements and full-time / part-time status

Average Weekly Earnings, Australia (/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/average-weekly-earnings-australia/latest-release) includes average weekly earnings for full-time adults and all employees every six months.

Employee Earnings and Hours, Australia (/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/employee-earnings-and-hours-australia/latest-release) includes composition and distribution of weekly (and hourly) earnings and hours paid for estimates every two years by:

- employment arrangement (permanent, fixed-term contract or casual)
- full-time and part-time status
- managerial and non-managerial status
- method of setting pay (award, collective agreement, individual arrangement)
- adult, junior, apprentice and disability rate of pay.

Employee earnings (/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/employee-earnings/latest-release) includes mean and median weekly (and hourly) earnings and distribution estimates annually by:

- employment arrangement (for example, various measures of casual employment, and fixed-term contract)
- full-time and part-time status
- working arrangements (for example, job stability measures, shift work, work from home, flexible hours).

Occupation and skill level

Occupation

Employee Earnings and Hours, Australia (/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/employee-earnings-and-hours-australia/latest-release) provides earnings data for more than 350 occupations by sex and method of setting pay every two years. Distributional data and additional cross-classifications are available for broader occupational groupings. Detailed occupation data broken down further by employer and demographic characteristics are available from Microdata and TableBuilder: Employee Earnings and Hours (/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/available-microdata-tablebuilder/employee-earnings-and-hours-australia) or through a customised data request.

Employee earnings (/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/employee-earnings/latest-release) includes mean and median earnings for 8 occupation groupings annually by sex, industry, status in employment and education qualification. Distribution data is also available for the 8 occupation groupings. More detailed occupation data is available from Microdata and TableBuilder: Characteristics of Employment (/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/available-microdata-tablebuilder/characteristics-employment-australia) .

The Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) (/statistics/classifications/anzsco-australian-and-new-zealand-standard-classification-occupations/2021) is used to categorise occupations.

Skill level

Employee Earnings and Hours, Australia (/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/employee-earnings-and-hours-australia/latest-release) and Employee earnings (/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/employee-earnings/latest-release) both also provide data on skill level, as each occupation is assigned a skill level in ANZSCO.

Skill level data provides insight into the range and complexity of tasks performed in a particular occupation. The skill level is applied to the occupation (not individuals) and measures the level or amount of formal education and training, previous experience in a related occupation, and on-the-job training required to perform the tasks of a particular occupation.

For more information, please see How ANZSCO works (/articles/how-anzsco-works) .

Pay-setting method (award, collective agreement, individual arrangement)

Employee Earnings and Hours, Australia (/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/employee-earnings-and-hours-australia/latest-release) includes earnings data by method of setting pay, identifying how an employee's pay is set. Methods are classified into four categories:

- award only,
- collective agreement,
- individual arrangement,
- owner manager of incorporated enterprise.

Method of setting pay data can be broken down further by employer and demographic characteristics.

Industry and other employer characteristics (including employer size, sector)

Average Weekly Earnings, Australia (/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/average-weekly-earnings-australia/latest-release) provides estimates of weekly earnings by industry and public/private sector every six months.

Employee Earnings and Hours, Australia (/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/employee-earnings-an

d-hours-australia/latest-release) includes compositional and distributional earnings data by industry, public/private sector, and employer size every two years. These employer characteristics can be broken down further by demographic characteristics including age, sex and state and territory.

Monthly Employee Earnings Indicator (https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/monthly-employee-earnings-indicator/latest-release) provides experimental estimates of employee earnings (salaries and wages), sourced from Single Touch Payroll (STP) data.

Wage Price Index, Australia (/statistics/economy/price-indexes-and-inflation/wage-price-index-australia/latest-release) measures changes in the price of wages and salaries, and is available by industry and sector.

Labour Account, Australia (/statistics/labour/labour-accounts/labour-account-australia/latest-release) includes quarterly estimates of costs incurred by enterprises in employing labour and the income received by people for working. Estimates are produced by industry division and sub-division. Sex and age group estimates are produced at industry division and Total All Industries. The Labour Account is a recommended source for industry data as it brings together a range of labour market statistics into a single framework, providing a coherent and consistent dataset.

Business Indicators, Australia (/statistics/economy/business-indicators/business-indicators-australia/latest-release) provides quarterly estimates of employee wages and salaries for the private sector by industry.

Public Sector Employment and Earnings (/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/public-sector-employment-and-earnings/latest-release) includes annual estimates of cash wages and salaries for the public sector by industry and level of government.

Topics available by data source

This table summarises the most relevant earnings data sources by topic. Preferred sources change depending on who is providing the information - household sources are generally preferred for person characteristics with business sources preferred for job and employer characteristics. However, business sources also generally provide more accurately reported earnings as data are obtained from employers' payrolls. The quality of earnings data has been prioritised when assigning ratings in the table below. For more information on the strengths and limitations of different sources, please see the Earnings chapter (/statistics/detailed-methodology-information/concepts-sources-methods/labour-statistics-concepts-sources-and-methods/2023/concepts-and-sources/earnings#abs-data-sources) of Labour Statistics: Concepts, Sources and Methods.

Some of these data sources have extra topics available through their TableBuilder or microdata products. We produce additional data sources which also include earnings statistics on these topics.

Topics available by data source (a)(b)

	AWE	Census	EE (c)	EEH	JIA	LA (d)	MEEI	NA (e)	PIA	PSEE	WPI
PERSON CHARACTERISTICS											
Sex	✔	■	■	✔	✔	■			✔		
Age groups		■	■	✔	✔	■			✔		
State/ territory	✔	■	■	✔	□		■	■	✔	■	✔
Region		■			✔				✔		
Education		■	✔								
JOB CHARACTERISTICS											
Part-time and full-time	■ (f)		✔	✔							
Employment arrangement		■	✔	■	■				□		
Occupation and skill level		■	✔	✔	□				□		
Pay setting method				✔							
EMPLOYER CHARACTERISTICS											
Industry	✔	■	■	✔	■	✔	■	■	□	■	✔
Sector	✔		■	✔	■		■	■	□	■(g)	✔
Employer size				✔	■		■		□		

✔ Recommended for this topic in relation to earnings data.

■ Published for this topic in relation to earnings data however some limitations (/statistics/detailed-methodology-information/concepts-sources-methods/labour-statistics-concepts-sources-and-methods/2023/concepts-and-sources/earnings#abs-data-sources) should be noted.

□ Available for this topic upon request or via TableBuilder and microdata products.

a. Ratings provide guidance on the relative quality of the different sources. Business sources generally provide more accurately reported earnings than household sources as data are obtained from employers' payrolls. Business sources are recommended for each topic where available. For more information, please see the Earnings chapter (/statistics/detailed-methodology-information/concepts-sources-methods/labour-statistics-concepts-sources-and-methods/2023/concepts-and-sources/earnings#abs-data-sources) of Labour Statistics: Concepts, Sources and Methods.

b. Acronyms: National Accounts (NA), Average Weekly Earnings (AWE), Employee earnings (EE), Employee Earnings and Hours (EEH), Jobs in Australia (JIA), Labour Account (LA), Monthly Employee Earnings Indicator (MEEI), Personal Income in Australia (PIA), Public Sector Employment and Earnings (PSEE), Wage Price Index (WPI).

c. Based on data from the annual Characteristics of Employment Labour Force supplementary survey.

d. The ABS recommends Labour Account as the best source of labour income data at the total all industry level.

e. Average Earnings National Accounts, which is measure of labour costs per employee, a wider measure than employee earnings.

f. Full-time adults and all employees.

g. Public sector only.

Data and resources available

This section summarises the earnings data available according to their key features. It also lists other information which may help you to understand earnings data.

Earnings data sources

We produce many data sources measuring earnings and employee remuneration related concepts. The most relevant data sources are included below.

ABS earnings data sources

Release	Pillar	Frequency	Description
Average Weekly Earnings (/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/average-weekly-earnings-australia/latest-release)	Business survey	Six monthly	Headline estimates of weekly earnings. Used extensively in legislation.
Employee earnings (/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/employee-earnings/latest-release)	Household survey	Annual	Median weekly and hourly earnings as well as distribution estimates for detailed demographic and employment characteristics. More detailed data is available through Microdata and TableBuilder: Characteristics of Employment (/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/available-microdata-tablebuilder/characteristics-employment-australia) .
Employee Earnings and Hours (/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/employee-earnings-and-hours-australia/latest-release)	Business survey	Two-yearly	Compositional and distributional estimates of hourly and weekly earnings, hours paid for and methods used to set employees' pay for a range of demographic and employer characteristics. More detailed data is available through Microdata and TableBuilder: Employee Earnings and Hours (/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/available-microdata-tablebuilder/employee-earnings-and-hours-australia) or customised data request.
Public Sector Employment and Earnings (/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/public-sector-employment-and-earnings/latest-release)	Admin data	Annual	Public sector employment estimates by state/territory, and level of government.
Jobs in Australia (/statistics/labour/jobs/jobs-australia/latest-release)	Admin data	Annual	Job level income estimates for more than 2,200 regions, as well as by industry and occupation detail sourced from personal income tax data in the Linked Employer Employee Dataset (LEED). More detailed data available through Microdata and TableBuilder: Jobs and Income of Employed Persons (/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/available-microdata-tablebuilder/jobs-australia) .
Labour Account (/statistics/labour/labour-accounts/labour-account-australia/latest-release)	Accounts	Quarterly	Labour payments, labour income and compensation of employees, by industry – division and sub-division level. Sex and age group by division and Total All Industries level.
Labour Costs (/statistics/economy/finance/labour-costs-australia/latest-release)	Business survey	Irregular	Components of labour costs - earnings, superannuation, payroll tax, workers compensation, fringe benefits tax.
Monthly Employee Earnings Indicator (https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/monthly-employee-earnings-indicator/latest-release)	Admin data	Six monthly	Experimental estimates of employee earnings (salaries and wages), sourced from Single Touch Payroll (STP) data.
National Accounts (/statistics/economy/national-accounts/australian-national-accounts-national-income-expenditure-and-product/latest-release)	Accounts	Quarterly	Average Earnings National Accounts (AENA), otherwise known as Compensation of Employees per employee, is designed to measure the average level of labour cost per employee. Compensation of Employees (COE) provides a wider measure than employee earnings as it includes severance and termination payments, all irregular remuneration such as irregular bonuses and exceptional payments.
Personal Income in Australia (/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/personal-income-australia/latest-release)	Admin data	Annual	Personal income estimates for more than 2,200 regions, as well as by industry and occupation detail sourced from personal income tax data in the Linked Employer Employee Dataset (LEED). More detailed data available through Microdata and

Release	Pillar	Frequency	Description
			TableBuilder: Jobs and Income of Employed Persons (/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/available-microdata-tablebuilder/jobs-australia) .
Wage Price Index (/statistics/economy/price-indexes-and-inflation/wage-price-index-australia/latest-release)	Business survey	Quarterly	Quarterly and annual wage indexes, unaffected by changes in compositional factors including employee characteristics and hours worked by industry, state/territory and sector.

Other information

- Earnings and working conditions statistics (/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions)
- Labour Statistics: Concepts, Sources and Methods - Earnings (/statistics/detailed-methodology-information/concepts-sources-methods/labour-statistics-concepts-sources-and-methods/2023/concepts-and-sources/earnings)
- Understanding earnings in Australia using ABS statistics (https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/6310.0Main%20Features5August%202013?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=6310.0&issue=August%202013&num=&view=)
- ABS data sources for earnings, employment income and total personal income (https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Previousproducts/6333.0Appendix4August%202018?opendocument&tabname=Notes&prodno=6333.0&issue=August%202018&num=&view=)